A

LETTER

TO HER GRACE THE

DUCHESS

OF

DEVONSHIRE.

[Price One Shilling.]

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OF

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A NEW EDITION.

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MADAM,

IT is now about ſeven years, ſince ſome friendly hints, and wholeſome Admonitions, crav'd Your Grace's Obſervation. The pen which convey'd them, far from being dipt in the Gall of moroſe Severity, was moiſten'd with that ſalutary Balm, which the pureſt friendſhip could ſelect. 'Twas in that giddy ſeaſon of Levity and Diſſipation, which

ſo conſpicuouſly recorded Your Grace's firſt claim to the Title of DEVONSHIRE, when that pen was employed.

To reſtore the ſullied Dignity of your exalted Station, to ſilence the caluminating inſinuations, which the envy of *your* Sex, and the malice of the *other* had created; and to invite the early Attachments of your Mind to connubial Tranquility, and to ideas congenial with your rank, were the ſeveral ends it was ſolicitous to obtain. How far it ſucceeded is not my deſign to determine, but it will ſurely be moſt candid to attribute the *Interval* of Prudence and Retirement from the popular Gaze, more to your own diſcernment and meliorated underſtanding, than to the growing inſipidity of the dull repetition of Amuſements, which is too apt to clog the enjoyment, and to ſeek refuge in Novelty.

THAT you did retire awhile from your accuſtom'd levity both of Dreſs and Manners, is a truiſm long to be remembered, with delight, by your ſincereſt Admirers. They beheld the affected habit of Childhood laid aſide, with that pride and ſatisfaction, which your *becoming* Conduct can at all times inſpire. They participated in a degree the ſenſations of your Noble Duke, when you turn'd your back upon the increaſing Follies which ſolicited your ſanction and example, and judiciouſly permitted the chaſte invitations of Domeſtic Endearment "to call the lovely wand'rer "home."

To compleat their wiſhes, a propitious Circumſtance was publickly announced; I call it *propitious*, becauſe, as its

its conciliatory efficacy is felt in humbler life, ſo it was univerſally thought capable to compoſe the extravagant Flights of Your Grace's Fancy, to draw off your attention from the direction of the toilet, and entice it to the novel and more delightful Superintendance of the Nurſery.

HEREIN were centered all their hopes; it was natural to imagine, and few inſtances have ever occurred to weaken the dependance, that the ſoft and indiſpenſable engagements of the Mother, would for a while ſuſpend, if not altogether deſtroy the frivolous and unamiable ſuggeſtions of diſſipation and folly. Your known Generoſity of Heart had likewiſe given them no unpromiſing earneſt of ſuch a Reform; and your evident predilection for Popular Admiration had ſuggeſted, that your Prudence would have pointed out to you, that the diſcernment of the multitude is awakened by domeſtic and maternal Perfections, clearly to be collected from the tributes of Affection, paid by a generous People to the beſt of Queens. Theſe conſiderations led them to imagine that becoming a Mother, HER GRACE OF DEVONSHIRE would become an *exemplar* one.

NONE, but a malign Spirit, can with-hold this acknowledgement of juſtice from Your Grace, that the Cradle has inſpired your Breaſt with Senſations, unknown in the Labyrinths of Luxury and Faſhion; you have proved yourſelf Madam,

"NOT FREE FROM FAULTS; YET NOT TOO VAIN TO MEND."

AND

And I cannot paſs over in ſilence, what muſt ever be regarded as one of the brighteſt Jewels in your ducal Diadem: the tendereſt office of Nature, which modern Mothers inhumanly diſregard, was by *you* moſt religiouſly performed!—Hear it! ye aſpiring daughters of Diſſipation, and let the prevailing requiſition of Infancy be henceforth obeyed!

Had Your Grace preſerved an *uniform* degree of Prudence, that envied degree of public Approbation, which you ſo rapidly eſtabliſhed, would ſtill have defended you from the Commiſeration of the ſerious, and the Sport of the vulgar.

You need not be again reminded, Madam, that you are one of the firſt women in this kingdom, in Rank, Fortune and Beauty: what then ought to be your ſtation in our eſteem and admiration? Among the firſt! 'It is your own fault, if *ſuch* Advantages do not ſecure to you *ſuch* Pre-eminence: and permit me to add, it is a *Crime*, if they ſuffer your Conduct to merit the *juſt Cenſures* of the *loweſt* order of your inferiors.

It may be urged, that the Indiſcretions of perſons of Rank, being more open to obſervation, are more expoſed to uncandid reproach than thoſe of retired life; but it muſt be remembered, that *they* have likewiſe *their Advantages*; ſince public Applauſe ſeldom fails to crown *their virtuous* conduct: whilſt the unrecorded excellencies of the private cha-

character, live but in the pious memory of a friend, or perhaps, in ſentences of ſimplicity, adorn his obſcure ſepulchre.

" Full many a Gem, of pureſt ray, ſerene,
" The dark unfathom'd caves of Ocean bear;
" Full many a Flower is born to bluſh unſeen,
" And waſte its ſweetneſs on the deſart air."

GRAY.

NEVERTHELESS, there are but few of your friends, I truſt, who would ſtrain the above remark, to cover Indiſcretions even in a lady of Your Grace's rank, which in point of Delicacy alone conſidered, would for ever fix a reproach on virtuous Females in a more obſcure ſphere.

As your Rank cannot juſtify your Conduct, ſo neither can the Friend nor the Cauſe, which ſo harraſſes your tender frame, afford excuſes plauſible enough to ſilence that *malicious* Public, who, unawed by the frowns of Nobility, will ſtill be hardy enough to hazard an Opinion.

To pauſe a little upon your Rank: we will, for argument's ſake, ſuppoſe that you was engaged in a conflict which did Honor both to your head and heart. Is every amiable and becoming Quality to form one undiſtinguiſhed Sacrifice? Is Dignity, Decorum, nay, Decency itſelf, to fall victims to your Zeal? Will your Phrenzy hurry you away ſo far, as to affect to deſpiſe public Diſpleaſure? You have before been told, that declarations of this kind will

not be believed, ſince the whole of your paſt Conduct will give a poſitive denial to ſuch an aſſertion; and if *public Admiration* can make ſo eaſy a conqueſt of your feelings, it muſt be ſomething more than the eloquence of Beauty itſelf, to perſuade us they are callous to *public Contempt*.

How can we poſſibly reconcile ourſelves to believe, but from the obſtinacy of the Fact, that a virtuous character, ſo conſpicuous in the catalogue of our Nobility as the DUCHESS OF DEVONSHIRE, can, with any particle of Patience, ſuffer her Name to be ſo degraded, as to appear at the head of a Liſt of *Female Canvaſſers!* ſome of whom are notorious Monuments of their Sex's Frailty.

How can we reconcile the reflection, that Your Grace, after having led captive the affections of the diſtinguiſhed faſhionable world, ſhould, at length, riſe ſo early, and ſo late take reſt, to make conqueſt of the *rude, unpoliſhed,* and you will agree with me, Madam, if I add, *uncivilized* part of Mankind? What but the thirſt of *univerſal* Dominion could have effected ſuch a Change?

PERMIT me to call to Your Grace's recollection, that, however the great and diſtinguiſhing Titles of our country may indiſcriminately, in a long line of inheritance, emblazon the births of the ſimple, the abandoned, the giddy, and the vain: in their *creation* they were conferred *only* upon the Great, the Glorious, and the Good: that the being born

born to titles, is not ſufficient to inſure Reſpect; and ſome Accompliſhments are neceſſary on the part of the poſſeſſor, to preſerve the neceſſary diſtinction.

THE dignity is but entruſted for a time, which with the eſtate is to paſs on in ſucceſſion to another; it ſhould then methinks, inſpire as great a pride to tranſmit the former without blemiſh, as the latter without decay.

'TIS with the Family Title, as with the Family Manſion, the conſequence of both is increaſed or diminiſhed in proportion to the conduct of their Owner: if the venerable and magnificent Fabrick, whoſe ready Gate was once as open for the pious Relief and Shelter of the needy Sojourner, as for the admiſſion of all the Pride of Equipage and State; as famed for the extenſive Hoſpitality, as for the Splendor of its Board, ſhall moulder in neglect, and its inhoſpitable Lord forget the Bounty of his Anceſtors; what wonder if the Stranger ſhall diſregard, worſhip only in remembrance, and prefer the plain but bounteous Cottage before it? So the Title, though enriched with all the accumulated Graces of Anceſtry, cannot ſhield its poſſeſſors from contempt, when they are unmindful of the *eſſentials* to preſerve their Importance; nor muſt they be ſurpriſed, if, when they deſcend to employments and ſituations diſſonant with common delicacy, much more with their Station, that in the balance of Reſpect, the *Coronet* ſhould be *overlooked*, and their Conduct excite only Sorrow or Deriſion.

I HAVE in my recollection, a few lines very applicable to this ſubject, of M. Le Prieur's,

L'éclat d'un ſang fameux lui tient, lieu de vertus,
On chérit des honneurs, ſans efforts obtenus;
Par deux cens ans d'ayeux, on penſe enfler ſon être,
On aime à naître grand, pour s'exempter de l'être.
* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *
Malgré ces noms fameux, le vice eſt toujours bas,
Ils annoncent l'honneur, mais ne le donnent pas.

WHEN ſo exalted a character as the Ducheſs of Devonſhire condeſcends to viſit the confines of Ebriety and Prophaneneſs, it becomes the natural enquiry, What could induce Her Grace ſo to depart from the dignity of her houſe, the principles of her education, and the delicacy of her ſex? Hence, the inclination of the Duke your Huſband is conſulted: and it is clear, that *his Conſent* does not ſanctify ſo aggravated an inſtance of Indecorum. Where then is Authority? It muſt be confeſſed, there is too much cauſe to ſuſpect, either, that the reins of power are held too ſlack, or that your nature is too incorrigible to ſubmit to reſtraint.

YOUR Grace's beſt Friends have not ventured to defend you on the Score of theſe. In order, Madam, to examine the excellence of your Engagement ſtill further, I will ſolicit your attention a few minutes longer, without drawing you into the political Rage of the Day, which, for the credit of your relation to the Peerage, I will ſuppoſe you not to have conſulted.

THE

THE riſing generation will have little or no Encouragement to Morality, in an age, wherein nothing can inſure to them the Patronage of the Great, but the moſt abandoned principles. If your Grace admits that poſition, I will add, that when the confidential Companion of a youthful Prince ſhall be verſed in every faſhionable diſſipation, and deſtitute of every diſpoſition to adorn or amend the heart, it will not be wondered at, if under the influence of ſo *accompliſhed* a Monitor, every dawning Excellence ſhould be diſcouraged, and the ſolid and laſting Advantages of an extenſive and virtuous Education, checked in their growth: It will not be wondered at, if every amiable Quality, the natural Impulſe of his unſpotted Mind, inſtead of being guided to the beſt, ſhould be proſtituted to the moſt diſgraceful purpoſes: if thoſe hours of leiſure, calculated for amuſements, which might tend to add dignity to, and expand his Soul, ſhould be waſted in every exceſs which can ſerve only to debaſe it.

I will now aſk, For whom is Your Grace's Friendſhip thus engaged? And what is the cauſe which has expoſed you to the moſt inconteſtible Tokens of Diſguſt from every claſs of people, who have any regard for propriety, or veneration for true Nobility?

BLUSH! GRANDEUR! BLUSH!

SHOULD it ever be your bleſſing, Madam, to ſuperintend the infant mind of a future Duke of Devonſhire, I truſt the Phantom which now deceives you will be unveiled, and you will be able to form a more intimate and accurate idea of your preſent conduct.

You will then be convinced, that the valuable Poſſeſſions of a good mind are not to be trifled with, that the intereſt of the Parent and Child ſhould be one, as eſſential to the happineſs of both; and that whoever would ſeparate it, would be an Enemy to both.

Without being ſuſpected of adulation, I may venture to ſay, that the perſonal Charms of your Grace are too tranſcendent, abſtracted from your ſtation, to be expoſed to the unbridled gaze of that order of people, whoſe higheſt gratification is in the opportunity of bringing their Superiors down to their own Level, and whoſe ambition too frequently centers in calling forth the Bluſhes of inſulted Chaſtity.

If you could indulge vanity enough, to believe that the eloquence of your Beauty would make ample amends for the weakneſs of your Cauſe, in many inſtances, it is to be feared, ſuch Vanity was well founded: but it is as certain, that ſuch a ſtep will return upon you with tenfold Diſappointment: for, being rendered thus familiar, thoſe Charms will fade upon the public Eye; and having been abuſed to ſuch unamiable ends, muſt for ever be a ſubject of Indifference, to ſay no more, inſtead of Admiration.

If you feel any thing like Surpriſe, Madam, that Your Grace's Conduct ſhould be the theme of public Diſcuſſion, it will be relieved by this obſervation; that when a Ducheſs ſteps aſide from her proper Sphere, and forgets what is due to herſelf, it muſt of neceſſity follow, that her Inferiors will

will forget it too. And in an Age ſo prone to follow Your Grace's Example in all other reſpects, it would be ſtrange indeed, if they ſhould fail in this!

IMMERSED as you are at preſent in the general Tumult of an Election, I cannot flatter myſelf that you will find leiſure to conſider the Remarks, which I have been free enough to make, upon your preſent unprecedented Popularity; but when confuſion ſhall be diſpelled, and all peacefully retire to their ſeveral ſtations, haply this Tract may catch your obſervation.

I TRUST, that the Period is not very remote, when your preſent Flights of Folly will appear to You in all their exaggerated Deformity; when the violated laws of Propriety will obtrude themſelves upon your Remembrance, without the aids of Flattery to extenuate, or Vanity to juſtify; and your Prudence will be able to deſtroy the Spell, which ſo powerfully faſcinates your enthuſiaſtic Imagination.

I have the honor of being,

Madam,

Your Grace's ſincere Friend,

And obedient humble Servant,

FINIS.